

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

JIMMY RENAY THOMAS,

Plaintiff,

v.

SACRAMENTO COUNTY SHERIFF'S  
DEPARTMENT TRANSPORTATION  
UNIT,

Defendant.

No. 2:20-cv-1951 TLN AC P

ORDER

Plaintiff, a state prisoner proceeding pro se with a civil rights action, has requested appointment of counsel. ECF No. 9. The motion suggests that indigent inmates are entitled to representation. That is not the case. Although indigent criminal defendants are entitled to appointed counsel, there is no right to counsel in civil proceedings such as civil rights lawsuits.


The United States Supreme Court has ruled that district courts lack authority to require counsel to represent indigent prisoners in § 1983 cases. Mallard v. United States Dist. Court, 490 U.S. 296, 298 (1989). In certain exceptional circumstances, the district court may request the voluntary assistance of counsel pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(1). Terrell v. Brewer, 935 F.2d 1015, 1017 (9th Cir. 1991); Wood v. Housewright, 900 F.2d 1332, 1335-36 (9th Cir. 1990).

The test for exceptional circumstances requires the court to evaluate the plaintiff's likelihood of success on the merits and the ability of the plaintiff to articulate his claims pro se in light of the complexity of the legal issues involved. See Wilborn v. Escalderon, 789 F.2d 1328,

1 1331 (9th Cir. 1986); Weygandt v. Look, 718 F.2d 952, 954 (9th Cir. 1983). Circumstances  
2 common to most prisoners, such as lack of legal education and limited law library access, do not  
3 establish exceptional circumstances that would warrant a request for voluntary assistance of  
4 counsel. In the present case, the court does not find the required exceptional circumstances.

5 Accordingly, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that plaintiff's motion for the appointment of  
6 counsel (ECF No. 9) is DENIED.

7 DATED: May 9, 2022

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9 ALLISON CLAIRE  
10 UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE  
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